This was the seat of one of the small dukedoms. Many of its inhabitants had been close to the court, if not as officials or purveyors to the ducal household, at least as relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances of court purveyors or officials. After the revolution, the duke fled abroad. The republican government confiscated his estate, turned part of the palace into a school, and opened its magnificent park for public use. The duke's attorneys went to court and finally won the case. The people were not sure whether the duke would come back, but it was enough for them to know that his park would be closed again and the school thrown out of his palace. They were celebrating the duke's victory!

Feudal institutions had left a deep imprint on the German national character and it could not change in a few years, especially under the circumstances in which the Republic came to life. Society remained stratified, everyone clinging to his old position. In the scale of values of the people, order and discipline ranked higher than freedom and equality.

German workers who had reached the upper rungs of the political ladder preserved almost servile respect for their former masters and diligently imitated their ways of life. Acceptance of social inequality was bred in German bones. The first President of the Republic, Ebert, had been a leather worker and his humble origin remained a wound to his self-respect, a blemish on his name. Right-wing newspapers alluded to him as a former cobbler's apprentice. His chancellery sent letters to the newspapers to correct the statement: "Mr. President has never been a cobbler. He was a saddlemaker in his youth." The newspaper refused to recognize this subtle distinction, and the President sued it. After a court had thrown out his case, he appealed without success. He was sure that, in protesting against the accusation of having been a cobbler's apprentice, he was defending the dignity of his office.

The Germans we met—mainly intellectuals with progressive leanings—impressed us as a strong breed of men, intelligent, decent, with highly developed feelings of duty and unusual stamina. Perhaps their sense of humor was somewhat different from ours, and they took themselves too seriously. Certainly most of them were infected by extreme nationalism combined with self-pity. This form of political neurosis, widespread in postwar Europe, was particularly acute in Germany.